MUTINY!

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM BLACK FLAG SYDNEY

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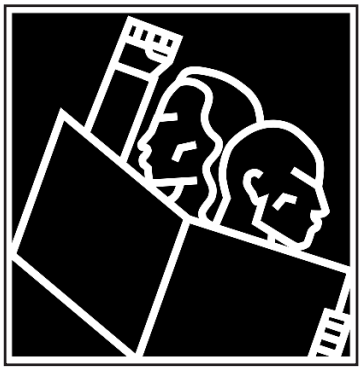
We would like to acknowledge that the land on which we live, work, and organise is unceded Aboriginal land.

We pay our respects to the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, on whose lands Black Flag Sydney is based. We offer our absolute and unequivocal solidarity to all First Nations peoples fighting for liberation, here and overseas.

We stand together now and always.



Editorial

Things are as crazy as they've ever been right now. Society approaches imminent collapse from multiple directions – the impending climate catastrophe, the threat of nuclear war in Ukraine, global disease, food crises, microplastics! Ah!!

It's often hard to find hope in the future, harder still to find it in the news. But, there actually have been many reasons to be hopeful in the past few months, and at least a few moments that seemed to hint at a brighter future. Workers have been striking across various industries, from nursing to the railways and all levels of education, continuing the fight for real pay increases and real improvements to working conditions. Women in Iran have been in open revolt over the unjust killing of Mahsa Amini (and many others) for a number of weeks now, recently joined by workers of the oil industry who helped topple the previous regime. Many thousands of Russian people have fiercely resisted the introduction of conscription as Putin's invasion falters, and soldiers have reportedly even begun organising mutinies from the front lines. In tremendous news for all current or former subjects of the British Empire and haters of colonialism everywhere, the Queen finally kicked the bucket, sparking global celebrations.

Amidst our various, overlapping crises, we should find solidarity in these moments of success and levity. We can take inspiration from the efforts of workers worldwide who are organising and fighting for a better world.

As always, *la lutte continue*!

REPORT

Workplace organising report: September 2022

RTBU

Rail workers of the Rail Tram and Bus Union (RTBU) have continued their fight for a 3.5% annual pay rise and for safety modifications on the new Intercity fleet of trains these last few months. Rolling industrial action has included bans on issuing fines and operating the majority of the state's fleet, and leaving Opal gates open for commuters. More recently, Union workers planned to turn off Opal gates completely, before backing down when the government threatened to sack individual workers. The Union leadership has since sought a Protected Action Ballot to officially take this action, seeking legal protection rather than calling the government's bluff. Politicians and the press have propagated typical anti-union nonsense to discredit the union's campaign, labelling them "terrorists" and complaining that rail workers are paid too much already. In response, the Union leadership has stressed the safety concerns with the Intercity fleet as a major sticking point in negotiations. However, by tactically deprioritising the pay dispute, the Union has missed an opportunity to make a clear political case for pay rises above inflation. The current claim of 3.5% is a real pay cut, and with the cost of living continuing to rise, workers will be worse off even if successful. The Union leadership has signalled that this pay rise need not break the NSW government's public sector-wide wage cap, as the claim can go through federal channels – a negotiation tactic that sidesteps the need to fight for a pay increase in real terms. Rank-and-file members of the RTBU should be clear that their fight for higher wages is just as critical as the fight for safer trains and staffing. Ultimately, all public sector unions must be willing to fight together to break the government's wage cap, not through negotiation but ongoing strike action.

NSWNMA

In late June, nurses held a stop-work meeting where their pay claim was increased to 7%. This was a bold but important political statement, won from the conference floor, that their pay rise must at least meet inflation if the campaign is to succeed. This was followed by statewide strikes at most public hospitals, with some (like Westmead Hospital) holding 24 hour pickets and others holding rallies of workers and supporters. While there was no central rally of nurses marching through Sydney, this action did succeed in bringing the dispute to areas of the state which might not otherwise see public displays of solidarity and protest. Contingents of unionists from other industries and student activists, including members of Black Flag Sydney, attended the strike rallies to offer solidarity and take inspiration for their own campaigns.

The government has not reversed its clear opposition to the nurses' campaign, and more actions are likely. NSW Labor has also remained committed to the wage cap, but recently announced an election policy for minimum staffing levels in hospitals. This is only a partial endorsement of the full nurse-patient ratios demand that the Union has pushed for nearly a decade, and a shallow promise considering the opposition leader opposed a NSW Greens Bill to legislate ratios months ago. Before this announcement, one NMA branch voted to bar speakers from its rallies who have not publicly supported its claims, which excluded Labor MPs from addressing its rallies. This no-compromise approach is essential if workers are to realise their goals independently of unreliable politicians. It remains to be seen whether Labor's offering will lead NMA members to throw their support behind the party's election campaign, or if strike actions will continue to escalate before the election.

NTEU

National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members at the University of Sydney continued their industrial activity by stopping work for 24 hours on 17 August and picketing the campus, with large contingents of student supporters. As management has refused to budge on pay and other important claims, the branch has voted to strike and picket for 48 hours on 13-14 October – its fourth strike action this year. Increased support for this strike from both new union members and students will be crucial to building momentum into the end of semester, before a three month break which could seriously dampen rank-and-file energy. While management has hidden behind a union-busting corporate lawyer from Melbourne, costing tens of thousands of dollars per negotiation, staff have escalated their campaign and grown the USYD NTEU branch to its highest density in over a decade. BFS members have helped to build and support the 'Rank and File Action' group, a coalition of left-wing union members at USYD working to turn the branch's recent growth into real energy on the picket line, and a sustained escalation of strike action into next year.

At the University of Technology Sydney, NTEU members took their first strike action on 21 September with a two-hour work stoppage and rally that brought staff and students together outside the main UTS tower. A second stop-work rally will be held on Wednesday 19th October. The campaign at Western Sydney University ended prematurely after only a single strike action, with an EBA that secured moderate casual conversion clauses in exchange for a serious real pay cut. This sub-par deal was lauded by NTEU officials and largely unchallenged by the membership. The results of these early campaigns will have a significant knock-on effect as other campuses around the country, like the University of Newcastle, begin taking industrial action to fight for similar demands.

ANALYSIS

The Yuendumu demands

Continued struggle is needed to achieve justice for deaths in custody

ON THE 9TH OF NOVEMBER, 2019, Kumanjayi Walker was shot and killed by Zachary Rolfe in the remote community of Yuendumu, some 300km from Alice Springs. In the hours leading up to his death, 4 heavily armed police officers had been deployed to find and arrest Kumanjayi Walker. Upon his finding, officers Rolfe and Eberl brutalised Walker, punching him in the head and face, before Rolfe shot him three times in the back and torso. Walker was then taken to Yuendumu police station, where he was later pronounced dead.

Kumanjayi's murder is not an isolated instance of police brutality against First Nations people in this country. As of the writing of this article, he is one of 517 Aborginal people who have died in custody since the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody in 1991.

In the aftermath of Kumanjayi Walker's murder, Zachary Rolfe was arrested and charged with murder. This followed a wave of protests across the country, and was announced while a large segment of the Yuendumu community were en route to protest in Alice Springs. By 2022, Rolfe was on trial for murder, an unprecedented event spurred on by both the horrifiic brutality revealed by the investigation, but also as a reaction to mounting pressure from the First Nations community to see justice in response to police brutality, in part inspired by the events following George Floyd's murder in America. The ensuing trial ultimately found Rolfe not guilty of muder, and today he is a free man.

Now, a coronial inquest has begun to probe the events surrounding Walker's death, as grieving community and family members seek to find truth and action in the hope that his death is not in vain. Coronial inquests have historically been ineffectual, with findings and subsequent recommendations never seeing the light of day, and often even working to actively protect prison guards and police officers by clearing them of any wrongdoing - as in the case of David Dungay's murder in 2015.

The picture painted by the Kumanjayi Walker murder, among the many hundreds of instances of police brutality against First Nations people is clear: Aboriginal people are systemically targeted and subject to abuse, humuliation and murder by racist police, judicial and carceral systems.

In response, the government has offered a number of ineffective legislative proposals over the years. Most recently, and carrying the most momentum is the Uluru Statement, which through the parliamentary process of reform has transformed away from demands of Truth and Treaty and towards installing a Constitutional Indigenous Voice to Parliament. A compromised deal with the right of parliament and business sector, the Voice to Parliament has been whittled down to a meek advisory role, holding no binding power to impact legislation and reform, and garnering heavy criticism from the grassroots First Nations community. Such approaches from the government are watered down by design: they exist only to produce a thin veneer of justice and social progress, intentionally overlooking the necessity of pulling apart racist and oppressive systems and rebuilding them.

In this statement, the Yuendumu community demands key strategic reforms, including autonomy away from oppressive colonial policing and toward community based approaches, an end to the racist Northern Territory Intervention laws, increased funding in community sectors such as housing, employment and health, accountability of the press which published lies about the nature of Walker's murder and finally, a comprehensive overhaul of the justice and courts system, and a retrial of Zachary Rolfe.

These demands mirror many of the programs around the country and the world calling for an uprooting of the racist systems that continue to oppress marginalised groups. The Deaths In Custody Project and ongoing protest movement similarly demands that the findings and 330+ recommendations of the Royal Commission of 1991 be implemented. They call for the defunding of police, with the money instead used for community programs and initiatives.

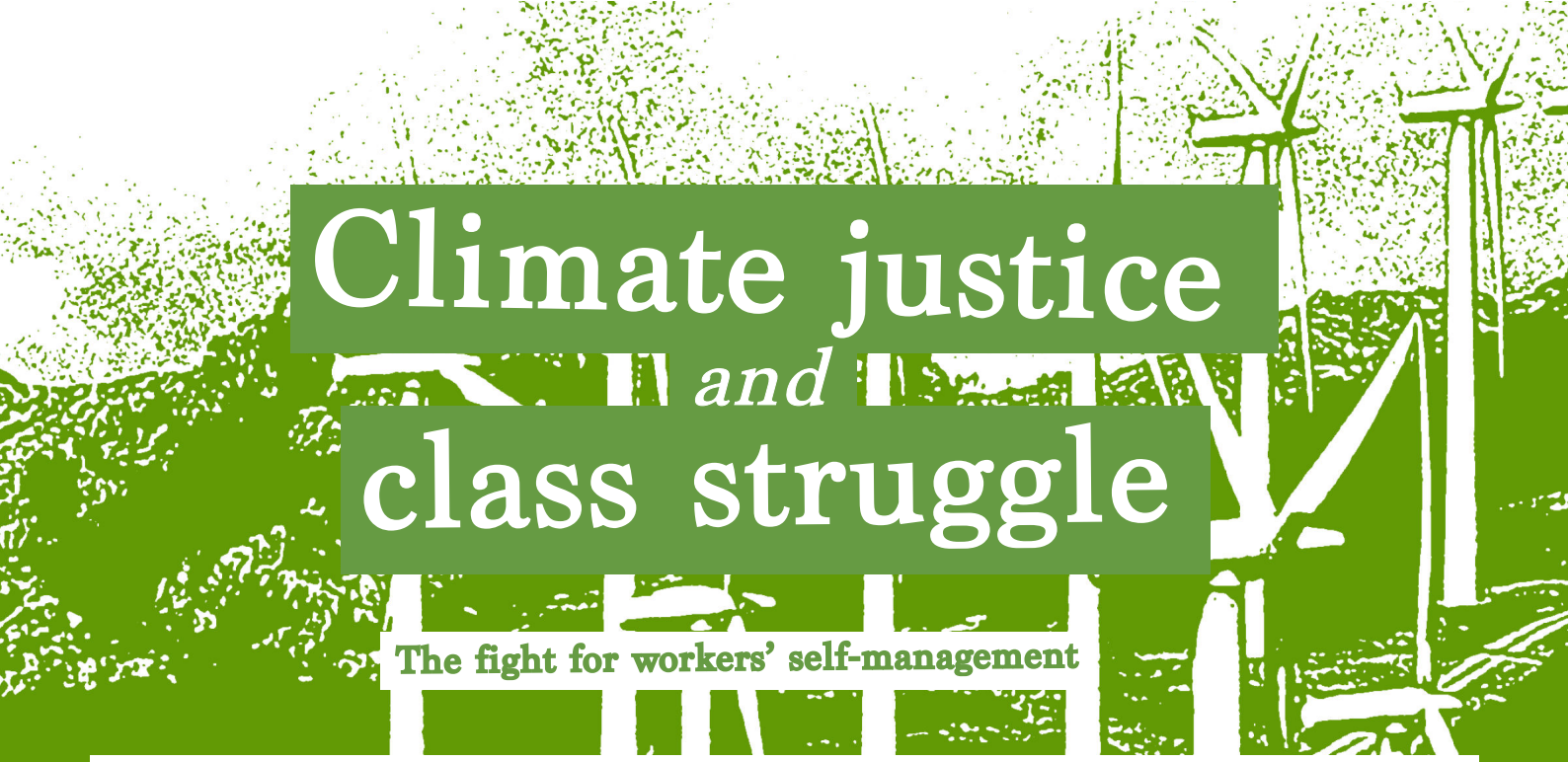
> **"Legislation projects such as the Uluru Statement and the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody all point in the same direction; they serve only as the parliamentary strategy to quiet outrage, and to maintain status quo. They uphold racist institutions which cast First Nations people as 'defective' and 'broken'."**

Legislation projects such as the Uluru Statement and the Royal Commission into Black Deaths in Custody all point in the same direction; they serve only as the parliamentary strategy to quiet outrage, and to maintain status quo. They uphold racist institutions which cast First Nations people as 'defective' and 'broken'. Only through a 'bottom-up' approach of collective struggle can the First Nations' communities see any tangible justice, and the details of the campaigns from grassroots and First Nations' communities reveal this contrast most pointedly.

In May of this year, the Yuendumu community released a statement of demands outlining a comprehensive programme that would meaningfully transform society and impact the material conditions of community members who are subject to the effects of systemic racism and colonisation.

It is only through the realisation of these transformative programs that the cycle of abuse handed down from the state and its judicial, carceral and police arms can be put to an end. It is our duty therefore to stand in solidarity with working-class First Nations communities, and to ensure we bring the Yuendumu demands to every workplace and grassroots organisation in which we participate.

These demands are specific, clear, and focused on real, material change. They have been formulated by the community themselves, not political representatives and popular figures. These should be the focus of our campaigns for Indigenous justice, not symbolic changes like 'constitutional recognition', and we hope that other communities take inspiration from Yuendumu to form their own self-determined vision for material reform•



Climate justice *and* class struggle

The fight for workers' self-management

THE ALBANESE LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN in power for several months now, and their action on climate change has been predictably pathetic. Their newly legislated target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 43% below 2005 levels by 2030 is not only inadequate in the urgent fight against climate change, but actively harmful to the climate movement and progress towards zero emissions. It greenwashes our government and over-inflates the impact of our climate action while forging ahead with destructive policy.

There is no set 'deadline' by which to fight climate change, but the timeline is accelerating beyond expectation. Shocking images of rivers in Europe and China almost entirely drying up this summer, while devastating floods destroyed whole regions in Pakistan, are stark reminders that even the projections made by leading climate scientists may be too optimistic. We cannot be clearer: in the Albanese era, climate delay is equivalent to climate denialism.

Beyond the inadequate 43% target, which offers no enforcement mechanisms and consists mainly of regular progress reports, Labor continues a raft of destructive climate policies. The ALP will continue to support and fund new fossil fuel projects, and with Resources Minister Madeleine King saying things like 'coal and gas will continue to heat our homes and keep manufacturing going for many years to come', we can be under no illusion that even they believe they are doing enough to fight climate change. Labor is in lockstep with previous Coalition policy by promoting the expansion of domestic gas supplies and continuing development on major fossil fuel projects in the Beetaloo Basin, Northern Territory (which could drive up Australia's emissions by 13%), through the Scarborough Gas Project (which could produce 1.6bn tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions over its lifecycle), and by offering 47,000 sq km of Australian water to oil and gas exploration. Labor will also continue with many of the Coalition's controversial carbon offset schemes, where companies buy into carbon offset projects instead of reducing their emissions directly. Such schemes have been shown to be accounting tricks with companies claiming false emissions reductions often for protecting forests that were never going to be cleared, growing trees that were already there or growing forests in places that will never sustain carbon sequestration permanently. It is now clear, if it was ever in doubt, that a Labor government cannot and will not deliver on climate action.

The Greens cannot solve this crisis for us either. Despite the hope many activists place in the party, they have shown their hand early in passing Albanese's climate bill without opposition. But, this is not an unexpected loss of vision or promise – it is the only available parliamentary strategy left to the Greens, and is only more evidence of the inadequacy of a parliamentary path to climate justice. After 10 years of being hammered for the decision to stand against bad climate policy, the Greens have learned their electoral lesson and taken a conciliatory compromise approach. As is always the case with parliamentary political parties, the only way to placate their rivals and exert influence within the system is through negotiation and compromise. But the climate crisis is uncompromising, and will only demand more radical solutions as time slips away.

A left-wing movement strong enough to force real progress requires a coherent and unified strategy to build power from below. The organised, radical Left has struggled to build effective, stable alliances within the wider climate movement and re-mobilise the crowds of up to eighty thousand people seen at earlier rallies in 2019 and early 2020. Even recent natural disasters like the northern NSW floods have not brought these numbers out onto the streets again. Activists have worked hard to keep the lights on in the climate movement, but we unfortunately find ourselves rehashing the same debates with a limited cohort of socialist organisers, liberal environmental NGOs, small community groups and a few parliamentary representatives.

If we are to truly rebuild the climate movement from below, we cannot just wait for the next disaster. We must seek to agitate for mass direct action in its true sense: workers combatting the authority of capital and the state collectively as part of a coordinated mass movement. It is unrealistic to seek change from above – history shows that lasting and meaningful change does not come from the good will of parliamentary representatives or the negotiation skills of union officials. It is only when workers from every sector are united on the streets, and united in withdrawing their labour, that we can present a genuine threat to government and capital. It is only with this critical mass that we can avoid the persecution faced by individuals and small groups of blockaders and instead successfully defy the severe repression of the state, and eventually completely dismantle it. We must build a lasting coalition of rank-and-file unionists, students, and communities under this strategic vision, if we are to make any progress towards our goals.

This article lays out our strategic vision for rebuilding the climate movement into one which can not only win major reforms, but ultimately overthrow the system of capitalism which created the climate crisis. This vision centres on two key demands for initial reform: a just transition to a green economy for all workers, and a rapid transition to 100% publicly owned renewable energy.

Just Transition

A core aspect of realising climate justice and climate action in Australia is a just transition for workers who are embedded in the fossil fuel industry. A true just transition can both advance the conditions and class consciousness of workers, and restructure the economy around green energy and strong communities.

To achieve this requires building working-class power through unions, and utilising the only truly effective tool the working class has at its disposal to achieve its goals: strikes. Australia has a rich history of union militancy and successful strikes for both economic and social issues, from Aboriginal land rights with the Wave Hill walk off, to rejecting corporate urban development with the BLF Green Bans. It is essential for the climate movement that workers themselves gain greater bargaining power and militancy, to overcome the conciliatory strategies of union officials and the legal repression cemented by agreements like the Prices and Incomes Accords 1983 and the Fair Work Act 2009.

This is why all industrial activity is relevant to the climate movement. Anything that strengthens the will and organisation of workers is something which improves our capacity to collectively withhold our labour, and thus to win our demands, within and beyond the workplace. The drive towards greater union militancy should be led by efforts to encourage greater democratic, grassroots workplace organisation around climate-related issues wherever possible. So long as these committees organise workers at the rank-and-file level, they have potential to strengthen both fronts – advancing the labour movement itself while simultaneously bringing the "muscle" of mass organised labour into the climate movement.

Secondly, a just transition requires a universally accessible and liveable social welfare system, alongside free, well-resourced tertiary education and vocational training. This is the only way to ensure that workers (employed and unemployed) have a secure income and guaranteed access to retraining as the economy rapidly changes. Workers need the time and peace of mind to find new jobs and deal with the effects of climate change that are already substantially impacting us. The severe economic impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires and 2022 floods upon local communities demonstrates the precarity that will accompany increasingly frequent natural disasters, not to mention the impact of pandemics like Covid-19. A just transition which includes liveable welfare and free education would create a baseline of financial security for all workers, shielding communities from the economic impacts of future climate instability and the restructuring required for a transition to public renewables. It also offers workers a vision of the kind of world we wish to create – a hint at the redistribution that could be demanded through continued mass action. This is why we believe the demand for universal and accessible social welfare and education is essential to a just transition.

Publicly Owned Renewable Energy

It is clear that our future depends on a rapid transition to an economy powered entirely by renewable energy sources. The call for 100% publicly owned renewables by 2030 is one of the core demands of the climate movement, but what are we referring to with this demand, and why is it needed?

It is clear the "invisible hand of the market" cannot deliver a renewable economy, especially not within a timeframe which has the ability to change climate outcomes. Our goal is to move towards socialised methods of production, first through public ownership of energy infrastructure and ultimately through direct workers' self-management of industry. Intentional and coordinated development of renewable energy is the only way to overcome the massive technological, logistical and economic challenges posed by a rapid and urgent transition. As a kind of "united front" against privatisation, the demand for public ownership should be front and centre. However, it is worth developing our own position on what we mean by public ownership in the most ambitious, positive sense, and what comes after this demand should we win it.

Public ownership is essentially a defensive demand against the ongoing privatisation of essential industry by successive neoliberal governments; a means of bringing essential industry and services back into public hands so that their operation is more accountable to the demands of the working class. The current privatised energy system has resulted in issues of instability, poor maintenance, a lack of "future-proofing," and terrible safety and conditions for workers. As in all other instances, privatisation of the ownership and management of our energy grid has also impacted consumers, increased prices and impacted supply, as seen in the recent NSW energy crisis.

While public ownership is a more benign form of management than private enterprise, it does not change the inherently exploitative nature of the worker-manager relationship. Where 'public ownership' refers simply to nationalisation, it does not inherently challenge or even alter the class system and should therefore be seen as something quite different to 'common ownership' or workers' self-management, which is what will be required to reorganise society along communist lines. To make the 'publicly owned renewables' demand positive, proactive, and truly emancipatory, we must be willing to win people over to a more bold, socialist vision of industry and production.

We can point to efforts led by the ETU and MUA to map out offshore wind opportunities as the kind of work we should be supporting. We can also see hints of this vision in community-led energy cooperatives. Unions and communities should be organising together to identify where needs and opportunities are greatest and build strong models of

community ownership without the need for management by the state. Such initiatives, however, will not bring us closer to true public ownership unless they are part of a broader strategy of direct action and worker-led disruption, occupation, and reorganisation of workplaces across the country. We should push the climate movement to more explicitly champion this specific vision of public ownership, moving beyond nationalisation towards a socialist strategy of collectivisation.

United and Militant Climate Movement

The decisions made and actions taken in the next few years have on them the weight of the world. Our future depends on the ability of climate activists to force real change within this decade, and any delay raises the stakes. If a working-class climate movement can cohere around a clear political and strategic platform for systemic reform, we can build the kind of popular power that truly threatens capital and the state – a power often discussed at protests, but which has not been seen or felt for decades. To take hold of this moment requires building a united and militant climate movement.

The climate movement in Sydney has made good progress in recent years by settling on several key demands. Though they have been modified slightly for different protest actions and in response to new disasters, the four demands of the Climate Justice Alliance, which formed in late-2019 as a broad coalition of activists from across the movement, have been established as a widely accepted slate to cohere around. These demands are often formulated as follows:

- First nations justice. No mining or fracking on Indigenous lands. Funding for Indigenous-led land management with jobs on Country.
- Shut down the fossil fuel industry. No new fossil fuel or nuclear projects.
- 100% publicly owned renewable energy by 2030
- Support communities: a just transition to green jobs, including liveable welfare and funding for essential workers.

Whilst we believe it is essential to have an open and inclusive climate movement, we must also make sure the politics of the movement are not softened for the sake of popularity or false unity. The rise of environmental NGOs and climate independents such as the Teals has seen the rise of liberal individualist and market driven "solutions" for the climate crisis such as the push for ethical banking or superannuation investment, and shareholder activism. As anarchist climate activists, we instead argue for the demands outlined above, which have the potential to threaten capital and the state.

To win its chosen demands, this united climate movement must be militant in its strategy. We believe that the only truly emancipatory strategy is one based in the mass direct action of workers, organised from the ground up. This is not an idealistic or dogmatic position, but one which emerges from the demands and realities of the movement. If we are to fundamentally reorganise the economy, or even hold governments accountable over the course of an extended transition period, we must have the enthusiastic participation of a significant proportion of workers. A small cabal of revolutionary socialists will not alone spark a dormant mass movement into life; this movement must be grounded in deep rank-and-file organising and a culture of popular resistance built through repeated, escalating mass direct action.

We must denounce any call to simply vote change into existence or wait for the market to deliver climate action, and instead push for a defiant movement that poses a genuine threat to the system we currently endure. We cannot put our trust in individuals or organisations who do not believe in mass politics and working-class power, and we must seek to pull the left-wing base of the Greens and Labor parties away from these ideas and towards an explicitly socialist platform.

While liberal reformism is clearly unfeasible, so too is the insurrectionary individualism advocated by certain environmentalists who aim to block ports or disrupt industry for small periods of time. Individual acts of disruption, often confusingly referred to as "direct action," are not a sustainable method of achieving change. While the courage of these activists is commendable and we condemn their repression by the state wholeheartedly, these acts cannot build a mass climate movement, and they neglect the working class's most potent power in the strike.

If we are to sustain a coherent and effective climate justice struggle we must build a united front of working-class and revolutionary organisations based on a truly socialist strategic and political platform. We are not waiting for the Greens or the ALP to deliver mediocre reforms, we are building a revolutionary movement of workers, organised to seize control of industry and demand substantial reforms, and ultimately, the self-management of their workplaces, industries, and the economy. We must win the broader layers of the climate movement to this vision through both action and argument; building mass rallies with coordinated, rank-and-file contingents from our unions, campuses, and communities.

We argue that a truly 'pragmatic' climate movement is not one which celebrates the work of parliamentarians and environmental NGOs (because that's where most people place their faith), or which relies on disasters to turn out thousands to the streets. Pragmatism is acknowledging just how far we are from the revolutionary united front that we seek. Rather than looking for shortcuts to it in parliament, sporadic coalitions, or spontaneous, isolated outbursts of radicalist anger, we must begin establishing the long-term structures of radical political organisation that we need. Open coalitions and alliances must be politically grounded in the demands outlined above, and built on the involvement of rank-and-file union committees, student collectives, community groups, and the left-wing base of the Greens and Labor parties. These groups must be strategically oriented towards mass protest and agitation within trade unions for further militant action, if we are to build the kind of struggle that achieves our demands •

ANALYSIS

The absolute state of the NSW Labor Party

Our analysis ahead of next year's state election

THE NSW LABOR PARTY HAS NOT been in state government since Kristina Keneally was ousted in March 2011. Since then, the party has deteriorated even further and NSW Labor now tails the Liberal-National party, with state leader Chris Minns and the shadow cabinet silent on their election policies which won't be released until Christmas. This is a repeat of the federal Labor Party's 'small target' strategy, an attempt to shorten the attack period on their policies and monitor public opinion on the Perrotet government and its potential crises.

Chris Minns hails from the right-wing faction of the party, which has deep alliances of the conservative unions such as Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA), Australian Workers' Union (AWU), the Transport Workers Union (TWU), and the Health Services Union (HSU). The right-wing bureaucracies of these unions have been successful in lobbying Labor to maintain conservative positions on same-sex marriage and abortion, as well as negotiating myriad unfavourable EBAs in their industries. This influence has drawn the state Labor Party to the right, and even further from the interests of workers in NSW.

So what do NSW Labor really represent, and what can we expect in the March 2023 election?

PUBLIC SECTOR

In the public sector, the Labor government was responsible for implementing the 2.5 percent annual cap on wage increases in 2008. Most public sector unions have been actively striking and taking industrial action to fight this wage cap, which is still in place.

In response to the RTBU's current campaign, Chris Minns has declared on 2GB radio that his party "don't support these strikes. . . further strikes are just going to antagonise the transport public." Minns has also opposed efforts to legislate safe staff-patient ratios for nurses in public hospitals, only recently backflipping to make the issue an ALP election policy. This is a shameful political ploy, holding the urgent demands of nurses and midwives to ransom in return for the union's support in Labor's election campaign, when the changes could have been legislated months ago. Labor representatives have also been conspicuously absent from Teachers Federation rallies outside parliament house, and the party has offered no support for the union's campaign despite the government's hardline approach to negotiations. Minns has also not committed to ending the pay cap of his predecessors and prefers a "productivity-based bargaining" approach, which would tie pay rises to increased exploitation. With no support for strikes and no policy reform on offer, it is clear that the ALP is not able to deliver the change that workers are demanding across the public sector. Workers should instead continue to fight independently of the Labor Party during and after the election. Safe staffing ratios in hospitals, better recruitment in health and education, safer trains and standards on the rail network, and most importantly, a pay rise above the wage cap and inflation are critical reforms, and will only come through a prolonged and militant union campaign.

> **"The NSW Labor Party has nothing to offer workers, students, and communities in this state. We should be prepared to intensify each of our campaigns under a potential ALP state government come March next year. This means supporting workers in all unions, but especially the public sector, to escalate their activity and resist the efforts of officials who attempt to redirect energy towards the ALP's election campaign."**

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY

Unlike their federal equivalent, NSW Labor is not even able to greenwash its climate credentials with a sub-par emissions reduction policy. As it stands, the NSW ALP are committed to approving new coal and gas across the state if they form government next year.

This is a failure that has immediate and serious consequences. The new Perrottet budget recently announced the $130m Critical Minerals Activation Fund for the NSW mining sector, and several major projects have been recently approved by the NSW Government. These include: an extension of the Whitehaven Coal Narrabri Underground coal mine, the Kurri Kurri gas power plant, and the Hunter Gas Pipeline, and the Narrabri Gas Project. These projects have not been opposed at any stage by Labor despite major popular opposition and legal challenges to these approvals. The climate will not be made an election issue by the NSW ALP, as they are indebted to the donations of the fossil fuel industry, and the false assumption that working-class communities are all fervently pro-coal.

This is why we have been organising to protest the NSW ALP Conference in October 2022, with climate action a key pillar of the campaign. If Labor is to have any credibility on this issue, they must adopt a platform of real zero by 2050, no new fossil fuel projects and job transition for the current mining and non-renewable energy workers into the renewable energy sector. Of course, we do not hold out high hopes, and expect a state Labor government to act as willing patrons of Morrison's legacy, the so-called 'gas-fired recovery'.

QUEER RIGHTS

NSW Labor is outflanked by the Greens and even the 'teal' independents on queer issues, with Sydney MLC Alex Greenwich developing an "Omnibus Equality Bill" in the lead up to the state election, while Labor has almost no clear position on major queer rights issues. Labor's failure here is no surprise, considering the strength of the right-wing union bureaucracies of the SDA, the HSU and the Police Association within the party, who have historically made efforts to position the ALP against abortion rights and marriage equality.

The conservative influence of right-wing union bureaucracies can also be seen in more recent debates around the dangerous amendments to the NSW Religious Freedoms and Equality Bill that were proposed by Mark Latham in 2020. These amendments would have cleared the way for discrimination by

religious organisations in employment and service provision, and for hateful conduct by individuals in public (so long as it was justified by religion). The NSW Labor Party only backflipped on its support for this bill once its federal equivalent was dropped by the Liberals, and once the NSW Government had also withdrawn its support for Latham's amendments. ALP members of Latham's parliamentary committee, and the party more broadly, initially supported the amendments, with only the Greens and Alex Greenwich dissenting to the committee's findings.

Latham's second attempt at legislating discrimination, the "Education Legislation Amendment (Parental Rights) Bill", is still before the parliament. Labor have not committed to opposing this incredibly harmful bill either, despite its potential to seriously harm trans and gender diverse students and staff in NSW schools.

Housing

Successive state governments have moved to reduce the overall stock of public housing in NSW by removing residents from their homes under the guise of renovation, while selling off the majority of these public housing sites to the private market for 'redevelopment'.

This policy has become the neoliberal orthodoxy in NSW. While the Liberal government has actively facilitated these sell-offs through their 'Communities Plus' program, the Labor Party has failed to challenge the fundamental issues with the 'social housing' industry and the logic of a 'self-funding' Land and Housing Corporation (the department which builds and maintains public housing in NSW). The fact that LAHC is expected to finance public housing not through public funding but through 'asset recycling' is the core of the issue, as it justifies the sale of rezoned public land to developers, and the outsourcing of housing development, maintenance and management to not-for-profit companies called community housing providers (CHPs).

The Waterloo public housing estate, an historic site with a large proportion of Aboriginal residents and hundreds of long-term tenants, is currently the centre of a major fight against this model. The redevelopment would see the site increase from under 800 public housing dwellings to over three thousand units, with nearly two thirds of these new units going to the private market and the remainder being handed to CHPs. Similar developments are slated for Glebe, Eveleigh, Pyrmont, Riverwood, and regional estates like Coffs Harbour.

As has been argued by housing tenants themselves, this model causes major disruption to communities for almost no public benefit, and enables "privatisation by stealth" through the outsourcing of important public infrastructure. The NSW Shadow Housing Minister, Rose Jackson, has made only vague commitments to 'improved maintenance' and funding for energy efficiency retrofitting in social housing, yet no policies which address the need for tens of thousands more public housing dwellings per year, and an end to all forced evictions.

Anti-colonial movement

In 2021 alone, 16 people from various Indigenous nations in NSW died in prison or police custody - double the previous record from 1997.

Labor needs to look beyond the superficial gesture of the national First Nations Voice referendum (proposed for 2023) and offer material support for Indigenous communities. NSW Labor has never condemned the actions of police and corrective services, or offered support for the families of those who have died in custody. In fact, the NSW ALP has consistently worked to increase the powers and funding of the NSW Police Force during their terms in office.

In 2002, Labor Premier Bob Carr introduced the Terrorism (Police Powers) Act, which gave unprecedented, authoritarian (and unchallengeable) powers to the Police Minister. His successor, Morris Iemma, built additional police stations that cost $53.8 million and awarded a long-term contract to the private sector to manage about $700 million worth of police properties. The last NSW Labor Premier, Kristina Kenneally, actively defended what was then the biggest police force in the southern hemisphere by refusing to cut the bloated police budget during an economic downturn.

It is highly doubtful that Chris Minns will depart from the legacy of his predecessors on funding for police and prisons, and it is likely his party will continue to actively strengthen the colonial project in this state.

Anti-protest laws

The state government has been responsible for passing some of the most repressive anti-protest laws in the country, with the recent passing of the Roads and Crimes Legislation Amendment Act 2022. These laws are a grave threat to the right to protest and strikes, with penalties of up to $22,000, two-years imprisonment, or both. The laws have emboldened police and encouraged increased police brutality and violence towards climate activists in particular.

If the Labor Party does not commit to reversing these laws immediately after forming government, they will be overseeing one of the harshest and most repressive state governments in the country, where protest is essentially illegal without the express permission of the police.

Conclusion

The NSW Labor Party has nothing to offer workers, students, and communities in this state. We should be prepared to intensify each of our campaigns under a potential ALP state government come March next year. This means supporting workers in all unions, but especially the public sector, to escalate their activity and resist the efforts of officials who attempt to redirect energy towards the ALP's election campaign.

We do not need Labor's election policy platform to tell us where to place our hope for change. We need only look to their record on recent issues to see the influence of conservative union bureaucracies on party policy. The NSW ALP, like its federal counterpart, is no representative of the working class •

ANALYSIS

Capitalism and refugees: unpacking the torture

Understanding the motivations behind our fucked refugee policies

> "[WE HAVE SEEN HOW] IN THE *last instance private property has turned man into a commodity whose production and destruction also depend solely on demand; how the system of competition has thus slaughtered, and daily continues to slaughter, millions of men. All this we have seen, and all this drives us to the abolition of this degradation of mankind through the abolition of private property, competition and the opposing interests."*
>
> **- Friedrich Engels, Outline of a Critique of Political Economy**

Why does Australia treat refugees like shit, even though it makes no sense at all? It is neither humane, nor strictly necessary on the government's own stated grounds. Australia's migration policies are ludicrously expensive, involving immense sums of money awarded to government departments and private contractors. Why does our government, usually concerned with minimising government expenditures, spend hundreds of millions on our borders for no apparent gain?

Is it a question of electability – are these policies just implemented by politicians seeking "lowest common denominator" votes among racists, a demographic amplified by the Murdoch media?

Is it the result of something lacking in the Australian psyche? The religious crowd and the NGO movement see it as something stemming from a lack of compassion. Even the more politically radical sectors of the movement sometimes reason in a circle and imply that the reason we have these policies is because not enough people are actively protesting against them.

For lack of a better word, we want to give a materialist explanation of what's going on – an analysis that captures the why and how of the social forces at play and their relationship to class society. This is all the more important, considering how border authoritarianism now seems to have become a fixed, essential part of the international state system, not only in Australia but in Europe and North America too. Considering too, the importance of the fight to open all the borders and close all the camps.

IS CAPITALISM INHERENTLY AGAINST REFUGEES?

In a way, it's easy to imagine a government that does not force refugees into offshore prison camps, torture them and force them into poverty and a legal quagmire onshore. It was only a few decades ago that Australia seemed to operate like this. Many countries still do.

However, things have changed quite drastically. Though the victory of the Labor Party in the 2022 election will likely mean the abolition of Temporary Protection Visas, it is absolutely certain that the Labor government will continue and perhaps accelerate the policy of border authoritarianism that has been developing for the past three decades.

In this light, the abolition of TPVs is less a sincere act of benevolence and more a bone thrown to refugees and anti-racists. The policies of refugee torture are wholly bipartisan; in a real sense, they can be traced back to the Keating Government introducing mandatory detention of boat arrivals in the early 1990s. It has only gotten worse since then.

> **"Though the victory of the Labor Party in the 2022 election will likely mean the abolition of Temporary Protection Visas, it is absolutely certain that the Labor government will continue and perhaps accelerate the policy of border authoritarianism that has been developing for the past three decades. In this light, the abolition of TPVs is less a sincere act of benevolence and more a bone thrown to refugees and anti-racists."**

The relations of capital, not the moralities of politicians, are at the centre of a refugee's existence from the beginning to the end. This underpins the policies of all governments towards refugees generally, as well as the apparent differences between political parties on the matter.

Conflict is not unique to capitalism, not by any means. However, the systematic nature of war in the capitalist era, combined with its sheer scale and international nature, is truly unprecedented. Horrific wars take place with regularity across the globe, all with the same kinds of root cause: political factions of the capitalist class, usually allied with one or several imperialist state powers, attempting to assert control of particular regions. These civil wars and interstate conflicts create enormous population movements, which wider global forces like the United Nations attempt to control.

To add to this, climate change – itself driven by the capitalist drive for greater and greater profit, at the expense of both the environment and the human population – is also creating enormous movements of people. Catastrophic environmental disasters are occurring with creasing regularity and these disasters will drive more and more people from their homes.

THE FUNCTION OF BORDER POLICY

Capitalism creates enormous movements of people that are uprooted from their homes and totally dispossessed. At the same time, it washes its hands of its responsibility for these same crimes. Your house may be bombed by an Australian jet, your hometown's water supply poisoned by the pollution of an Australian company, but try to come here without permission and you'll be ruined.

Increasingly, the desire of states is to control population flows like turning a tap on and off, to admit the human material it wants and reject what it does not. This is the point of our border policy, just as it is Europe's. Refugees are placed in barbaric detention centres to deter others from trying to migrate without permission. As the number of social conflicts across the world grows, so does the desire of capitalist states to introduce new means of controlling their borders. This is not something optional under capitalism, they are making predictable decisions in response to changing circumstances.

The logic is quite plain. At times, states will admit large numbers of people in order to fill workplaces with workers. The most prominent example of this in Australia occurred after World

War II, when enormous numbers of Europeans were allowed and encouraged to immigrate to serve as labourers in the new booming economy.

Occasionally, encouraging the migration of certain groups is valuable for circumstantial political reasons. The outpourings of official hospitality for Ukrainian refugees in Australia is an example of this. Protection visas were issued quite quickly to resident Ukrainians that wanted them, the deadlines for applications were generously extended and even free public transport vouchers were given specifically to them by the New South Wales government. Meanwhile, thousands of refugees of Middle Eastern, Asian and African descent reside in horrendous conditions in Indonesia, without work rights, permanent protection or the chance to go to Australia at all.

Certain economies, like Australia's, are structured around the targeted immigration of certain "economically valuable" groups, defined very precisely. Even in the United States, with its immense migration policing apparatus, the economy is built on the labour of hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans. In this light, the repression seems pretty clearly directed towards keeping said migrants in a state of hyper-exploitation, preventing them from organising and forcing them to accept criminally low wages and working conditions.

However, at the same time, these governments brutally reject those migrants that it does not need, that are not useful to them, either in a strictly economic or politically circumstantial sense. There are a number of people on both the left and right who attempt to defend a more open border policy on economic grounds, pointing to the fiscal benefits of migration. These people miss the point entirely, however, and by attempting to support an open borders policy on capitalist premises they end up just reinforcing the "closed border" policies they oppose.

Arising from class rule is the fundamental need for governments to enforce border security as a means of upholding the premise of "state sovereignty". The edifice of statehood is based on the notion that state authorities can control what passes through their borders, and an indefinite, uncontrolled flow of migrants would completely undermine this principle. The capitalist class never voluntarily gives up any of its own powers. This is why calls to loosen restrictions on migration or expand refugee intakes are so often fiercely opposed by them, even in many cases where unrestricted migration may be beneficial in a purely economic sense. The message is: we, the capitalist class, decide who comes to this country, and the circumstances in which they come.

Refugees: left for dead

When migrants or refugees are not useful for direct political or financial gain, they are discarded, despite the talk of "human rights" by governments and intergovernmental bodies. In a critique of Malthus from 1844, Engels made a point about the logic of capitalism that has been proven true over and over again: "when there are too many people, they have to be disposed of in one way or another: either they must be killed by violence or they must starve". While starving is the more common option, massacres are hardly rare either – September this year marks the 40th anniversary of the Sabra and Shatila killings, the Israeli-sponsored massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Catholic Fascists at the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut.

Violence against refugees is so regular that it is hardly even remarked upon. Australia's refugee policy is currently structured around "deterrence" – don't leave your home country to try and get here by boat, or else we'll put you in a prison camp so awful that you're likely to be afflicted with PTSD once you get out. Despite the exceptional and sadistic nature of our cruelty, it is still rather senseless to divide states into those that are "good" to refugees, and those that are "bad", as the problem is systematic.

The problem is not reducible to the misdeeds of one particular country, let alone one select group of politicians. Blame lies with capitalism itself, which is responsible for both the existence of refugees and their torture generally.

Countries with the most "humane" refugee policies generally only sustain these policies at the expense of refugees in more brutal neighbouring states. This is becoming particularly obvious in Europe as the EU begins to follow Australia's lead, using poorer or less influential countries as its human holding pens, as is the case in Greece. Clearly, a demand for more "compassion" or "humanity" from our government is not enough to reverse this fundamental crisis of capitalism. The struggle has to go further.

Revolution, the only way to liberation

Our belief is that the brutalisation of refugees is not something which is "optional" for governments. This naturally points to a limit for activist groups fighting the government. In a sense this is disheartening, but it is not our intention to be pessimistic.

Refugees, like all other migrants, are a class of non-citizens in a world structured around the privilege of citizenship. To state that the liberation of refugees is contingent on the ending of capitalism is not to state that refugee struggles in the present are worthless – in fact, it is stating the direct opposite. Refugee struggles are not simply requests for minor adjustments to capitalism, they strike at the heart of this fundamentally inhumane system and undermine the very premise of state sovereignty. Their victories are all the more significant for this.

The galvanision of these particularly exploited fractions of the working-class could have an immeasurable impact. Already, migrant workers both documented and undocumented play essential roles in sectors of the Australian economy – even moreso in the economies of the USA or UK. When migrant workers fight for better wages and conditions, this necessarily involves a fight against the state, breaking down the separation between political and economic struggles.

It's for this reason that socialists should work to engage the rest of the working-class in Australia with refugee struggles. Not only do they improve the chances of refugees winning, but they actively heighten and give a more radical character to their own struggles in the process •

What is Black Flag Sydney?

Black Flag Sydney is a collective of anarchist-communist workers who organise mainly on unceded Gadigal land.

Our ultimate goal is to build a society free of states, classes and currency, in order to achieve collective self-emancipation and universal freedom for all. Direct action is our method and worker self-management is our vision for today and the future.

We aim not only to dismantle systems of capitalist exploitation, but to build the capacity for people to freely and truly self-manage their workplaces, communities, and lives.

MUTINY!